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ABSTRACT

This dissertation summary discusses a study to determine the instructional competencies required by teachers of mainstreaming educational programs for handicapped secondary students. It also sought to establish the preferred staff development strategies and to identify the appropriate educators to conduct the retraining activities. Questionnaires were sent to 26 administrators and 81 teachers at Phoenix Union High School, Arizona, with an 88 percent return rate. Results showed that competencies in program planning, evaluation, counseling considerations, and facilitating learning were rated significantly higher than diagnosing pupil needs. In addition, administrators and teachers indicated first, that team members and consultants with handicapped student expertise were preferred to conduct competency training sessions and staff development strategies of workshops, and, second, that a combination of approaches, and inservice courses were preferred. (Author/LD)

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A STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR MAINSTREAMING SECONDARY HANDICAPPED STUDENTS

A Summary of a Doctoral Dissertation by Robert D. Anderson

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FOREWARD

This study is issue number three of Research Reports on Educational Administration for VolumeVII, 1976-77. Through the R.R.E.A. series, the Bureau of Educational Research and Services of Arizona State University strives to provide to Arizona's practicing school administrators reviews of recent research projects which provide information on significant educational questions.

The investigation conducted by Dr. Robert D. Anderson provided information on the competency needs of regular classroom teachers who are involved in "mainstreaming" programs for secondary level learning disability, emotionally handicapped and educable mentally handicapped students. Dr. Anderson studied the effect of length of teaching experience, teacher disciplinary specialization and previous exceptional children awareness on the perceived teaching competencies needs as rated by secondary teachers and administrators. Staff development strategy preferences of teachers and administrators were also surveyed.

Other dissertations which have been summarized and published in this series are listed on the inside back cover. Copies of the individual issues are available from the Bureau of Educational Research and Services, Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona 85281. The dissertations from which the reports are derived are available on interlibrary loan and may be obtained from any library upon application to the Director of Libraries, Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona 85281. They are also available on microfilm from University Microfilms, Inc. 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106.

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INTRODUCTION

Since the latter part of the nineteenth century the provision of educational services for handicapped children in the United States has been characterized by an emphasis on special class placement. Recently, however, several factors have combined to cause local and state educational agencies to review the services they provide for exceptional students. There is increasing support for a movement to "facilitate learning experiences for handicapped children in the regular classroom."

Increased litigation and several specific court decisions have called into question policies and procedures for special education screening and placement. Funding policies of the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped of the Office of Education now specify "testing, referral and review of placement procedures" for special programs. In addition, several efficacy studies conducted since 1960 reveal that handicapped students make as much or more progress in regular classrooms as they do in special self-contained programs. In addition to the various court decisions, funding guidelines, and efficacy studies, concerned parents of handicapped youngsters are also providing support for provision of educational services to their children within the regular classroom.

A review of the literature revealed that elementary teacher retraining for mainstreaming programs for handicapped students has emphasized non-cognitive objectives. In-service training utilizing workshop and institute formats has been the most frequently employed development strategy. Reports on training for teachers on the secondary level, where course content rather than individual student growth and skill achievement is emphasized, however, are virtually nonexistent. A need clearly existed for a competency-based program of teacher retraining to assure a comprehensive means of competency acquisition.

THE PROBLEM

The objectives of Dr. Anderson's investigation were to determine the instructional competencies required by teachers of mainstreaming educational programs for handicapped secondary students, to establish the preferred staff development strategies, and to identify the appropriate educators to conduct the retraining activities. The study sought answers to seven specific questions:

(1) What instructional competencies are needed by regular classroom teachers as determined by district and campus administrators? Is there a priority?

(2) What proficiencies are needed for integration as determined by teachers? Is there a priority of needs?

(3) Does teaching discipline, number of years of experience, or exceptional children awareness affect the ratings of competencies as determined by teachers?

(4) Who are the preferred educators to teach the competencies?

(5) What are the priorities of staff development strategies for developing teaching competencies?

(6) What relationship exists between ratings of teaching competencies by teachers and by administrators?

(7) What relationship exists between teachers' and administrators' ratings of staff development strategies?

PROCEDURE

A descriptive-developmental study design was utilized. From the literature review, seven categories of mainstreaming teacher competencies, five instructional personnel categories, and eight staff development strategies were developed. A questionnaire, based on the Competency Organization Model, was developed and validated.

The population consisted of all Phoenix Union High School District campus principals, district instructional administrators, and teachers of general education basic skills, occupational education, and other elective areas. The sample included central office directors and supervisors, all unit principals responsible for instruction, and a stratefied random sample from the three teacher categories.

One hundred seven questionnaires were distributed to twenty-six administrators and eighty-one teachers in December, 1975. Approximately 88.5% of those distributed to administrators and 88.9% of those sent to teachers were returned. The analysis of variance was calculated for the various competencies, the educator preferences, the competency ratings, and the staff-development strategies. Significant differences between mean ratings were established by utilization of Scheffe's S method of post hoc analysis. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficients were calculated to determine relationships between the ratings provided by the administrative and teacher groups.

FINDINGS

Analysis of the date provided the following information:

(1) The seven competencies considered in the study were: Introduction to exceptional children, diagnosing pupil needs, delivering services, planning programs, facilitating learning, counseling considerations and evaluation. Administrators rated all seven as important competencies for teachers of exceptional children. However, program planning, evaluation, counseling considerations, and facilitating learning were rated significantly higher than diagnosing pupil needs.

Service delivery and introduction to exceptional children were not rated significantly different from the other five. The priority rating of the competencies by administrators revealed that the categories of facilitating learning and delivering services rated significantly higher than counseling considerations.

(2) Teacher ratings of competency items indicated a significantly greater need for training in planning programs than in diagnosing pupil needs. Their priority ratings did not, however, indicate diagnosing pupil needs to be significantly different from other categorical ratings.

(3) No significant differences were found between teacher ratings of competencies and the three teaching disciplines, three categories of years of experience, and two responses to exceptional children awareness.

(4) In the analysis of teacher responses concerning education to teach competencies, team approach, consultants, and special education teachers were rated significantly higher than administrators and professors.

(5) Similar preferences were found for administrators except special education teachers were not rated significantly higher than administrators.

(6) Teacher ratings indicated a significant preference for workshop, a combination to two or more strategies, and inservice courses and activities to graduate courses, modular courses, special meetings, institutes, conferences, or conventions. However, graduate and modular courses were rated significantly higher than conventions.

(7) Administrators rated workshops, inservice activities, and a combination of two or more approaches significantly higher than special meetings and conventions.

(8) A high correlation between competency items as rated by administrators and teachers was found.

(9) High mean ratings of the competencies and narrow ranges of the ratings of both administrators and teachers indicate that the competency items related to the categories were considered important for teachers to attain.

(10) There is a significant relationship between staff development strategies as rated by teachers and administrators.

CONCLUSIONS

The researcher made the following conclusions:

(1) Educational administrators rated item competency statements of: *planning instructional programs, evaluating student achievement and instruction, counseling considerations for students and their parents, and facilitating learning within the classroom* significantly higher than competencies of diagnosing and assessing pupil needs.

(2) Regular classroom teachers rated item competencies of *planning instructional programs* significantly higher than competencies of diagnosing and assessing pupil needs.

(3) Teaching discipline, number of years of experience, and *previous exceptional children awareness* did not affect the ratings of competencies.

(4) Administrators and teachers indicated that team members and consultants with handicapped student expertise were the preferred personnel to conduct competency training sessions.

(5) Teachers significantly preferred *staff development strategies of workshops, a combination of approaches,* and *inservice courses and activities.* Administrators rated the same three categories significantly higher than special meetings and conventions.

(6) The relationship between teachers' and administrators' ratings of competencies was high.

(7) Teachers' and administrators' ratings of staff development strategies for teachers to achieve the competencies were significantly related.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the statistical analysis of the data collected the researcher made eleven recommendations concerning the competencies, organization of training programs, and suggestions for future studies.

(1) Diagnosing and assessing pupil needs should be included in training programs for counselors and special education teachers, but should remain optional for regular classroom teachers.

(2) A replication of this study should be conducted for counselors and teachers of the three areas of exceptional children.

(3) Continuing professional education programs should include team competencies for special classroom teachers as well as for regular classroom teachers. These competencies should incorporate elements of alternative service models.

(4) Programs resulting from this and similarly designed studies should be implemented by local agencies with available resources.

(5) Data-gathering instruments for similar studies should include categories for regular teachers who have handicapped students within their classrooms.

(6) Future studies should divide exceptional children awareness into three responses: (a) university courses; (b) workshops, conferences and institutes; and (c) no awareness.

(7) A study should be conducted to determine the types of support services needed for the various service models appropriate for the high school level.

(8) Preferred competencies and strategies should be incorporated into jointly planned sessions for teachers and administrators.

(9) Competency-based exceptional student courses should be included in programs of study for preservice and graduate students at the college and university level.

(10) Preferred competencies should be taught to participating teachers of all disciplines.

(11) The personalized approach of issuing instruments and subsequent follow-up should be used when possible.

IMPLICATIONS

This study provides information which has important implications for those designing staff development programs.

(1) The significantly high relationships between administrators' and teachers' preferences for certain competency items as well as staff development strategies provide important data for the content and design of staff development programs to facilitate the "mainstreaming" of secondary learning disability, emotionally handicapped, and educable mentally handicapped students.

(2) The lack of any significant differences between teacher ratings of competencies and the three teaching disciplines, the three categories of years of experience, and the two responses to exceptional children awareness imply that the needs of regular classroom teachers are common to all. The delivery of staff development programs may, therefore, be more efficiently managed than would have been the case had there been significant differences. The benefits of a "saturation" training model as contrasted with the "trickle down" model, may be available for this group of staff members.

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